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**Evolution and
the Value of Life**

**Is Christianity
Rational?**



Is Christianity?

Logical Part II

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is the second installment in a two-part series exploring the allegation of atheism that the Christian Faith cannot be reconciled with science and reason, and that it constitutes a belief system in which "rational discourse proves impossible." Part I appeared in the June issue and focused on Jesus' own use of logic. Part II follows below, and continues, without introductory comments, where the first article ended.]

The Argument Over the Identity of the Messiah (Matthew 22:41-46)

Still another magnificent manifestation of Jesus' logical competence is seen in the argument He posed to the Pharisees over the identity of the Messiah:

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him, "The Son of David." He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool"'? If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?"

In this interchange, Jesus directed the Pharisees' attention to the Old Testament personage, the "Messiah" (*mah-SHEE-ach*), a term occurring 39 times, always translated in the Septuagint as *christos*. Both terms mean "anointed one." Jesus was, in fact, the long-awaited Messiah/Christ. His question was intended to spotlight this fact. The answer to His question given by the Pharisees, i.e., "the Son of David," was correct, but incomplete. The Messiah was, indeed, expected to descend through

the bloodline of King David (2 Samuel 7:12-13; see Luke's genealogical verification of this point in Luke 3:23-38), and also inherit the throne of David based on His legal lineage (see Matthew's genealogical verification in 1:1-17 of his gospel account; cf. Miller, 2003b). What the Pharisees were having trouble accepting was the **deity** of the Christ.

Hence, Jesus followed their answer with two additional questions that lead the honest listener to that realization. First, how is it that David, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, penned the words of Psalm 110:1 in which he stated: "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" Observe carefully the precise wording Jesus employed. His first allusion to "lord" in the Hebrew text is the divine name, variously transliterated "Jehovah" (ASV), Yahweh, etc. English translations alert the reader to this fact by placing the term in all capitals—LORD. The second occurrence of the term "lord" in Jesus' statement is the usual Hebrew word for a lord (*adonai*), whether human or divine. Notice the logic: According to King David in the inspired Psalm 110 which he penned, God the Father spoke to his (David's) Lord, i.e., the Christ/Messiah. David referred to the Messiah as his Lord.

So Jesus asked His final question to bring His logical presentation to a climax: "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?" How can the Messiah/Christ be the **son**, (i.e., descendant) of David, and yet already be in existence as David's **Lord**? The only way such could be the case is if the Messiah's physical body came

genetically from David (cf. Hebrews 10:5; Psalm 40:6), but the Messiah Himself, that is, His person, His spirit, pre-existed David by inhabiting eternity alongside God the Father. Jesus was pressing His enemies to face the fact that He was, in fact, the Messiah—God in the flesh, on Earth, in their very presence. They were so dumbfounded by this revelation, that "no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore" (vs. 46).

The Legal Treatment of the Adulterous Woman (John 8:1-11)

Jesus' logical acumen is again self-evident in the narrative of the woman caught in adultery. [NOTE: For a discussion of the technical aspects of this passage as a textual variant, see Metzger, 1968, pp. 223-224; 1971, pp. 219-222; McGarvey, 1974, p. 16; Woods, 1989, p. 162.] This passage has been used by situation ethicists (e.g., Fletcher, 1967, pp. 83,133), libertines, and liberals to insist that God is not "technical" or concerned with being logically consistent when it comes to requiring close adherence to His laws. The bulk of Christendom has abetted this notion by decontextualizing and applying indiscriminately the remark of Jesus: "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first" (vs. 7). The average individual, therefore, has come to think that Jesus was tolerant and forgiving to the extent that He released the woman from the strictures of God's Law that called for her execution. They believe that Jesus simply "waved aside" her sin, and thereby granted her unconditional freedom and forgiveness—though the Law called for her death (Leviticus 20:10). The untenable result is to pit the Law of God against the grace of God, placing people in the so-called "grip of grace" (Lucado, 1996).

Did Jesus act inconsistent with a rational and logical approach to the woman's predicament? No, He did not. A careful study of the passage yields three insights that clarify the confusion and misconception inherent in the popular imagination, while demonstrating Jesus' logical skill. First, Mosaic regulations stated that a person could be executed only if there were two or more witnesses to the crime

(Deuteronomy 19:15). **One** witness was insufficient to invoke the death penalty (Deuteronomy 17:6). The woman in question was reportedly caught in the “very act” (vs. 4), but nothing is mentioned about the identity of the witness or witnesses. **There may have been only one**, thereby making execution **illegal**.

Second, even if there were two or more witnesses present to verify the woman’s sin, the Old Testament was equally explicit concerning the fact that **both** the woman **and the man** were to be executed (Deuteronomy 22:22). Where was the **man**? The accusing mob completely sidestepped this critical feature of God’s Law, demonstrating that this trumped-up situation obviously did not fit the Mosaic preconditions for invoking capital punishment. **Obedience to the Law of Moses in this instance actually meant letting the woman go.**

A third consideration that often is overlooked concerning this passage is the precise meaning of the phrase “He who is without sin among you...” (vs. 7). If this statement were to be taken as a blanket prohibition against accusing, disciplining, or punishing the erring, impenitent Christian, then this passage flatly contradicts a host of other passages (e.g., Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14; Titus 3:10; 2 John 9-11). But the Bible never contradicts itself. Jesus not only **frequently** passed judgment on a variety of individuals during His tenure on Earth (e.g., Matthew 15:14; 23; John 8:44,55; 9:41; et al.), but also enjoined upon His followers the necessity of doing the same thing (e.g., John 7:24). Peter could be very direct in assessing people’s spiritual status (e.g., Acts 8:23). Paul rebuked the Corinthians’ inaction concerning their fornicating brother: “Do you not **judge** those who are inside? ...Therefore put away from yourselves **that wicked person**” (1 Corinthians 5:12-13, emp. added). Obviously, Paul demanded that Christians must **judge** (i.e., make an accurate evaluation of) a fellow Christian’s moral condition. Even the familiar proof text so often marshaled to promote laxity (i.e., “Judge not, that you be not judged”—Matthew 7:1) records Jesus admonishing disciples: “then you will see clearly to remove the

speck out of your brother’s eye” (vs. 5). The current culture-wide celebration of being **nonjudgmental** (cf. *I’m OK—You’re OK*) is clearly out of harmony with Bible teaching, and the Bible must not be charged with the inconsistency.

So Jesus **could not** have been offering a blanket prohibition against taking appropriate action with regard to the sins of our fellows. Then what did His words mean? What else could possibly be going on in this setting so as to completely deflate, undermine, and terminate the boisterous determination of the woman’s accusers to attack Him, by using the woman as a pretext? What was it in Christ’s words that had such logical force to stop them in their tracks—so much so that their clamor faded to silence and they departed “one by one, beginning with the oldest” (vs. 9)?

Most commentators suggest that He shamed them by forcing them to realize that “nobody is perfect and we all sin.” But this motley crew—with their notorious and repeatedly documented hard-heartedness—would not have been deterred if Jesus simply had conveyed the idea that, “Hey, give the poor woman a break, none of us is perfect,” or “We’ve all done things were not proud of.” These heartless scribes and Pharisees were brazen enough to divert her case from the proper judicial proceedings and to humiliate her by forcibly hauling her into the presence of Jesus, thereby making a public

spectacle of her. Apparently accompanied by a group of complicit supporters, they cruelly subjected her to the wider audience of “all the people” (vs. 2) who had come to hear Jesus’ teaching. They hardly would have been discouraged from their objective by such a simple utterance from Jesus that “nobody’s perfect.”

So what is the answer to this puzzling circumstance? Consider the possible explanation that Jesus was striking at precisely the same point for which Paul rebuked hard-hearted, hypocritical Jews in Rome: “Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge **practice the same things**” (Romans 2:1, emp. added). Paul was especially specific on the very point with which Jesus dealt: “You who say, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ do **you** commit adultery?” (vs. 22, emp. added). In other words, no person is qualified to call attention to another’s sin when that individual is in the **ongoing practice of the same sin**. Again, as Jesus previously declared, “Hypocrite! **First remove the plank from your own eye**, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:5, emp. added). After all, it is the “spiritual” brother or sister who is in the proper position to restore the wayward (Galatians 6:1).

Consequently, in the context under consideration, being omniscient, Jesus

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knew that the woman's accusers were **guilty of the very thing** for which they were willing to condemn her. (It is not beyond the realm of possibility that the fellow with whom the woman had committed adultery was in league with the accusers and present in the crowd). Jesus was able to prick them with their guilt by causing them to realize that **He knew** that they, too, were guilty. The Law of Moses made clear that the witnesses to the crime were to cast the **first** stones (Deuteronomy 17:7). The death penalty could not be invoked legally if the eyewitnesses were unavailable—or unqualified. Jesus was striking directly at the fact that these witnesses were legally disqualified from fulfilling this role since they were guilty of the same sin, and thus deserved to be brought up on similar charges. As McGarvey notes: "The one who executed the law must be free from the same crime" (n.d., p. 452). They were intimidated into silence and retreat by their realization that Jesus was privy to their own sexual indiscretions—and possibly on the verge of divulging them publicly.

Observe carefully that at the withdrawal of the accusers, Jesus put forth a **technical legal question** when he asked: "Woman, where are they? Did no man condemn thee?" (vs. 10, ASV), or "Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?" (KJV). The reason for Jesus to verify the absence of the accusers who had brought the charges against the woman was that the Law of Moses mandated the presence of eyewitnesses to the crime before guilt could be established and sentence passed. The woman confirmed, "No man, Lord" (vs. 11). Jesus then affirmed: "Neither do I condemn you...." The meaning of this pronouncement was that if two or more witnesses to her sin were not able or willing to document the crime, then she could not be held legally liable. Even Jesus, Himself, could not serve as an eyewitness to her action. The usual interpretation of "neither do I condemn you" is that Jesus was flexible, tolerant, and unwilling to be judgmental toward others or to condemn their sinful actions. This view is illogical, irrational, and beneath the Bible. The Bible repudiates such thinking on nearly every page. Jesus was declaring the fact that the woman managed to slip out from

under judicial condemnation on the basis of one or more legal technicalities. But, He said (to use modern-day vernacular), "You had better stop it! You were fortunate this time, but you must cease your sinful behavior!"

These scribes and Pharisees were trying to catch Jesus in a trap. Yet Jesus, using logic in conjunction with evidence, "turned the tables" on His accusers and caught **them** in a trap instead. At the same time, He demonstrated a deep and abiding respect for the governing beauty and power of law—the law that He and His Father had authored. Jesus was the only person Who ever complied with Mosaic legislation perfectly (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15). He never sought to excuse human violation of law, nor to minimize the binding and authoritative application of law to people. Any interpretation of any passage that depicts Jesus as **violating God's Law** in order to forgive or accommodate man is a false interpretation, as is any interpretation that relegates law to a status of secondary importance (cf. Deuteronomy 6:24; 10:13; Psalms 19:7-11; Romans 7:12). Clearly, Jesus' facility with sound reasoning, argumentation, and logical proficiency are abundantly evident. His application of legal principles in this circumstance further underscores His consistent commitment to the Law of Rationality.

Many additional instances of Jesus' logical genius are provided in the gospel accounts of His life on Earth, including

- His interaction with the Pharisees over taxes (Matthew 22:15-22)
- His logical justification for healing on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:10-13; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 13:10-17; 14:1-6; John 7:22-24)
- His response to the lawyers concerning the source of His miraculous power (Luke 11:14-26)
- His reading and application of the Law in His home town synagogue (Luke 4:16-30)
- His answer concerning fasting (Luke 5:33-39)
- His handling of Simon's disgruntled view of the sinful woman (Luke 7:36-50)

- His exchange with the Pharisees concerning His triumphal entry (Luke 19:39-40)
- His comments upon the occasion of His arrest (Luke 22:47-53)

The reader would do well to study these and other accounts carefully to become more acquainted with the Savior of the world, Who was the only fully consistent, rational Being to walk the Earth. Jesus was so sensible and rational in His discourse that when hard-hearted Jews irrationally declared Him to be mad or demon-possessed, clearer thinking individuals rightly countered: "These are not the words of one who has a demon" (John 10:21). Indeed, Jesus consistently provided evidence, even **empirical** evidence, to substantiate His claims (John 10:24-26, 36-38). But when men do not want to accept the truth, when they wish to believe and practice things that they desire to pursue, they will reject and castigate the use of logic. They turn against logic when logic turns against them.

Jesus' emphasis on logic and evidence stands in stark contrast to the false religious view that prevails within Christendom. Most people who claim to be Christian think that God expects people to "just believe," i.e., accept Christ without any proof, evidence, or rational justification, without questioning or being convinced of His validity. Most, in fact, see faith and proof as opposites. They think one must have faith in those areas where proof is unavailable. To them, faith is accepting what you cannot **prove**, and deciding to believe what you cannot **know**. When confronted by a skeptic who demands proof and evidence to verify the Christian religion, it is not uncommon to hear a person who professes to be a Christian respond: "I can't **prove** it to you; I just accept it by faith." Or, "I do not **know** that God exists, but I have decided to **believe** that He does." This notion of "blind faith" (cf. Miller, 2003a), i.e., believing without evidence, or in spite of the evidence, is more properly identified as fideism—a system of thinking that is contrary to the faith enjoined by Deity in the Bible (see Edwards, 1972, 1:201).

Jesus in the New Testament presents a completely different picture. God

God, Evolution, and the Value of Human Life

Eric Lyons, M.Min.

God made it clear in the very first chapter of the Bible that He made human life unlike all other life on Earth. After creating plant life on day three and animal life on days five and six, God said:

“Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:26-28).

God created **man** in His image. He gave **man** an immortal soul (Genesis 35:18; Matthew 10:28). He made **man** inherently more valuable than all other life on Earth (Matthew 6:26-30). From the very beginning, God expected man to eat plant life (Genesis 1:29), and, since at least the time of Noah, God has authorized man to eat animals (Genesis 9:2-3). In truth, man has been killing animals (for sacrifices, clothes, etc.) with God’s approval ever since sin entered the world (Genesis 4:4; Hebrews 11:4; Genesis 8:20; cf. Genesis 3:21). The shedding of man’s blood, however, is altogether different. Why? Because “in the image of God He made man” (Genesis 9:6).

Whereas the Christian worldview is grounded in the God-given value of human life and man’s superiority over the rest of God’s earthly Creation (see Psalm 8:5-8), atheistic evolution devalues human life to the point where man inheres no more value than rodents, roaches, and microbes. For decades, students in American public schools have read from textbooks that devalue human life. In the introduction to the unit on the animal kingdom in Holt’s 10th-grade biology textbook, students were taught: “You are an animal, and share a common heritage with earthworms...” (Johnson, 1994, p. 453). A 1989 *Earth Science* textbook published by Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich alleged that “humans probably evolved from bacteria that lived more than 4 billion years ago” (p. 356). In 2006, evolutionary ecologist Dr. Eric Pianka was named the Distinguished Texas Scientist of the Year. At his award ceremony, Pianka condemned “the idea that humankind occupies

a privileged position in the Universe” and “hammered his point home by exclaiming, ‘We’re no better than bacteria!’” (Mims, 2006). In a 2008 *New Scientist* article titled, “We Should Act Like the Animals We Are,” environmentalist David Suzuki stated in an interview with Jo Marchant: “[W]e must acknowledge that we are animals.... We like to think of ourselves as elevated above other creatures. But the human body evolved” (Marchant, 200[2678]:44).

Indeed, there is a stark contrast between theism and atheistic evolution. One says that God specially created man; the other says, we “share a common heritage with earthworms.” One says that man is inherently more valuable than animals; the other says “we **are** animals.” One says that man is superior to bacteria; the other says, “we’re no better than bacteria!” But, if we’re no better than microorganisms or the Earth on which we live, what will keep humanity from deciding to reduce the human population to 10% of the present number in order to “save mother Earth” from “overpopulation”? Dr. Pianka suggested such an idea during his 2006 award ceremony. What will keep lawmakers from banning the killing and eating of animals (our alleged equals)? And what about eating plants? They are alive, too. How can we justify eating plants and animals if we are no better than bacteria? How can we justify walking? After all, we might step on, and kill, a worm or a bacterium. If we lie down, we might destroy a bedbug. Even more troublesome, if we continue to breathe, we might inhale and destroy a microbe.

In truth, when people embrace the godless notion that human life and all other forms of life are equal, insanity prevails. Chaos rules the day. A biblical worldview, however, creates a rational order suitable for human existence.

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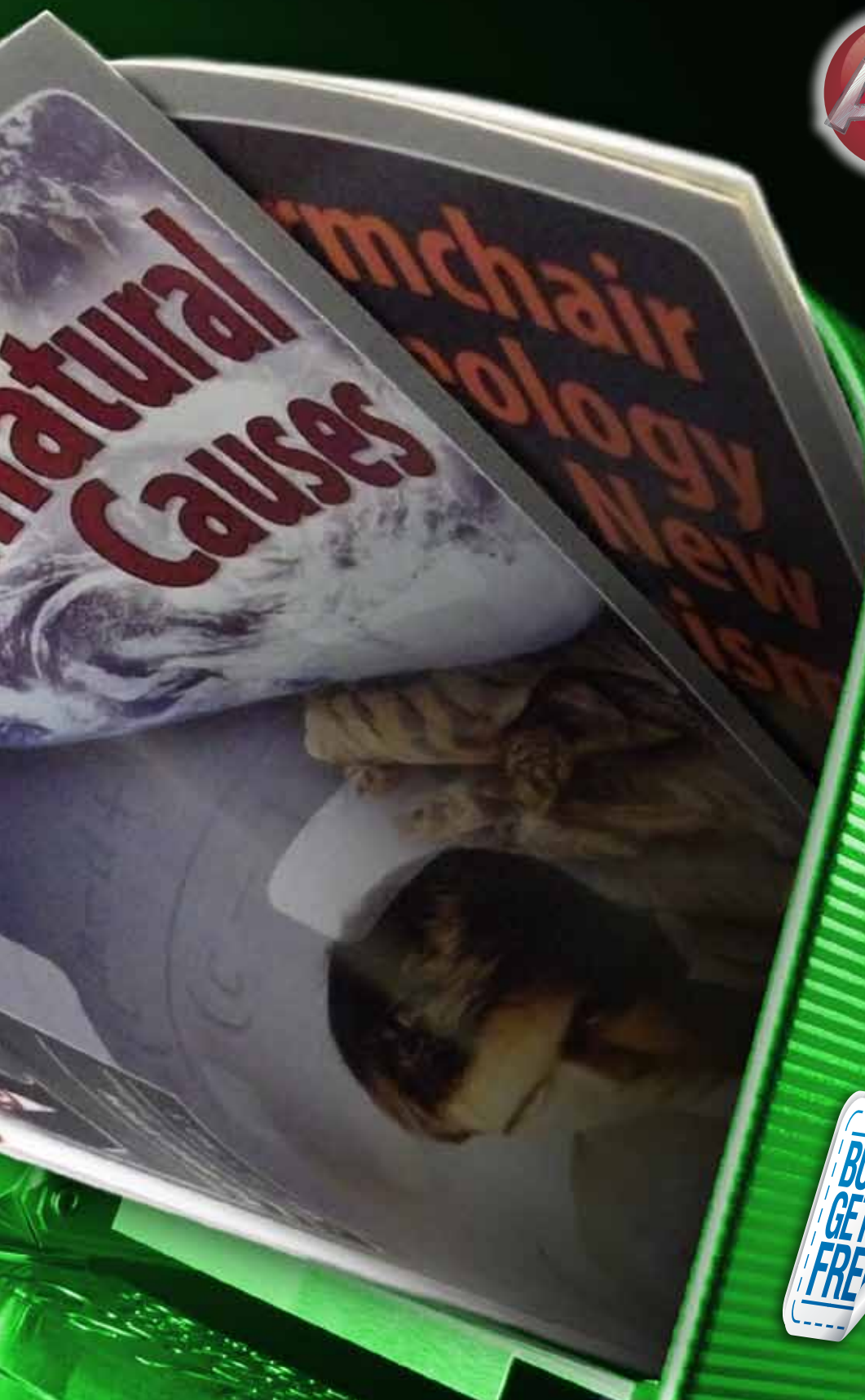
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never expects nor requires anyone to accept His Word without adequate proof. God empowered His spokesmen on Earth to verify and authenticate their verbal pronouncements by performing accompanying supernatural acts (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4). The book of John spotlights this feature repeatedly. When Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews, approached Jesus one night, he stated: “Rabbi, we **know** that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him” (John 3:2, emp. added). Nicodemus was a rational man. He saw evidence that pointed to the obvious conclusion that Jesus was of divine origin, and was honest enough to admit it. Observe that he made a **knowledge** claim, i.e., he claimed to possess such certainty of Jesus’ identity, based on the evidence, that he could not possibly be wrong.

If it is the case that God does not expect a person to believe in Him **unless** adequate evidence has been made available to warrant that conclusion, then we might reasonably expect to see Jesus urging people **not to believe** Him **unless** He provided proof for His claims. Do we find Jesus doing so while He was on Earth? Unquestionably. This fact is particularly poignant in Jesus’ response to the tirade launched against Him by those who refused to accept the proof of His divinity. He reiterated: “The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me” (John 10:25). In other words, evidence (“works”) point to ascertainable truth. When His subsequent explicit declaration of His deity incited angry preparations to stone Him, He boldly challenged them: “If I do not do the works of My Father, **do not believe Me**; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, **believe the works**, that you may **know and believe** that the Father is in Me, and I in Him” (John 10:37-38, emp. added).

This passage conveys three key considerations. First, Jesus did not expect anyone to believe or accept Him unless He provided proof. Second, one must not allow personal prejudice and personalities to prevent acceptance of the conclusion to which the evidence points. Third, once the proof was made available, one could **know** the truth and thereby believe, i.e., knowledge precedes faith. One cannot

biblically **believe** what one does not first **know**. That is why Paul declared: “I **know** whom I have **believed** and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day” (2 Timothy 1:12).

Since Jesus came to the planet to urge people to render obedient submission to Him (John 3:16; 8:24), it is difficult to envision Him telling people **not** to believe Him. **But that is precisely what He did** (cf. Miller, 2003c). He has provided the world with adequate evidence so that people may distinguish truth from error. How could anyone possibly question the fact of Jesus’ consistent use of logic and correct reasoning? He was, and is, the quintessential Logician Who created the human mind to function rationally. As we shall now see, His divinely guided disciples followed His example.

The Apostle Paul: First Rate Polemicist

Like his Lord, the apostle Paul was a master of logical argumentation in both oral and written proclamation. Shortly after his conversion, he entered upon a life-long career of debate and rational discourse. Examine carefully the terms that the Holy Spirit selected in the book of Acts to describe Saul’s inspired verbal activities:

- “But Saul increased all the more in strength, and **confounded** [*sugcheo*—bewildered, confounded in dispute] the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, **proving** [*sumbibadzon*—to prove, demonstrate] that this Jesus is the Christ” (9:22, emp. added).
- “Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths **reasoned** [*dielexato*—discoursed, argued] with them from the Scriptures, **explaining** [*dianoigon*—to open the sense of a thing, expound] and **demonstrating** [*paratithemenos*—propound, inculcate] that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.” And some of them were **persuaded** [*epeithen*—convinced].... Therefore he **reasoned** [*dielegeto*—argued] in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the

marketplace daily with those who happened to be there” (17:2-4, 17, emp. added; cf. 24:14).

- “And he **reasoned** [*dielegeto*—argued] in the synagogue every Sabbath, and **persuaded** [*epeisthaisan*—convinced] both Jews and Greeks.... And he came to Ephesus and...he himself entered the synagogue and **reasoned** [*dielexato*—argued] with the Jews” (18:4, 19, emp. added).
- “And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, **reasoning** [*dialegomenos*—arguing] and **persuading** [*peithon*—convincing] concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, **reasoning** daily in the school of Tyrannus” (19:8-9, emp. added).
- “So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he **explained** [*exetitheto*—set forth, expounded, exposed] and **solemnly testified** [*diamarturomenos*—earnestly affirm, bear witness, declare] of the kingdom of God, **persuading** [*epeisthaisan*—convincing] them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. And some were **persuaded** by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved” (28:23-24, emp. added).

The bolded terms in these verses connote rational, logical activity. They imply tacit endorsement of the Law of Rationality: “We ought to justify our conclusions by adequate evidence” (Ruby, 1960, p. 131). No wonder, in writing to the Thessalonians, Paul admonished them by paraphrasing the Law of Rationality: “Test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). The NASB renders the first phrase: “But examine everything carefully.” In other words, God expects all people to engage in a rational, logical pursuit of truth, with proper analysis of every viewpoint before accepting it as true. Neither Christianity nor atheism should be embraced **until and unless the evidence warrants it**.

Defending the Resurrection

Paul's magnificent defense of the resurrection was couched, by divine inspiration, in logical thought forms (1 Corinthians 15:12-20). Identified in formal logic as a series of hypothetical syllogisms ("If... then...."), Paul employed the inference rule identified by logicians as Modus Tollens: if *P*, then *Q*; not *Q*; therefore, not *P* (see Baum, 1975, p. 216; cf. Warren, p. 57):

- I. If no general resurrection, then Jesus not raised.
- II. If Jesus not raised, then—
 - A. Our preaching is vain
 - B. Your faith is vain
 - C. We are false witnesses
 - D. You are still in your sins
 - E. Those who have died have perished
 - F. We are of all men most pitiable
- III. But **you know and agree** that our preaching is not vain, your faith is not vain, we are not false witnesses, etc.
- IV. Therefore, Jesus was raised.
- V. Therefore, there will be a general resurrection.

Observe how Paul carefully brought the Corinthian Christians to the irresistible conclusion that "Christ is risen from the dead" (vs. 20). After examining such sophisticated logic, it is easy to see why Paul claimed concerning his divinely appointed role: "I am put here for the defense (*apologian*) of the gospel" (Philippians 1:16, RSV).

This logically exact methodology is typical of Paul and the other Spirit-inspired writers. When Paul charged Titus with orchestrating the appointment of qualified bishops on the island of Crete, he noted that elders must "be able, by sound doctrine, both to **exhort** and to **convict** those who contradict" (Titus 1:9, emp. added). In other words, as shepherds of the flock, elders must be debaters who can refute false teachers, enabling people to distinguish between truth and error. No wonder that, when Festus accused Paul of being crazy, Paul coolly countered: "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak the words of **truth and reason**" (Acts 26:25, emp. added). Paul answered the charge of insanity by arguing that his words were not only true, they were sensible, logical, and reasonable. The word translated "reason" is the

same word in its verb form (*sophroneo*) used to refer to the demoniac after the expulsion of the demons, rendered "in his right mind" (Mark 5:15). Paul instructed young Timothy: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, **accurately handling the word of truth**" and "with gentleness **correcting those who are in opposition**" (2 Timothy 2:15,25, NASU, emp. added). Truth must be handled properly, and those who misapprehend the truth must be logically and rationally corrected, i.e., brought to an accurate understanding of truth.

Additional instances of Paul's use of logic in defending truth are seen in his evangelistic travels in the book of Acts. For example, in the city of Lystra he offered a brief but pungent defense of the existence of the one true Creator God (versus the many pagan Greek and Roman gods). As proof of his assertion, he appealed to the evidence of natural revelation in the created order (i.e., "rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" [Acts 14:17]). Another example was his address to the court of the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17:22ff.). Incorporating supporting evidence from two Greek poets, Epimenides of Crete and Aratus of Cilicia, Paul again asserted the self-evident nature of God based on His Creation of the Universe, His immateriality, His creation of humanity, His eventual judgment of the world via Christ Who was raised from the dead. Paul's oral defenses before the Jerusalem mob (Acts 22) and

Sanhedrin (Acts 23), before the Roman procurator Felix in Caesarea (Acts 24), and before Felix's successor, Porcius Festus and King Herod Agrippa II (Acts 25) provide additional instances of Paul's logical skill. Truly, Paul, like Jesus, was a skillful logician who presented evidence that verified his verbal assertions. He admonished all others to so conduct themselves (e.g., 1 Thessalonians 5:21).

The Apostle Peter: Another Skilled Logician

Peter followed the same logical approach to his religious work. On the momentous occasion of the establishment of the church of Christ in Acts 2, Peter employed a Modus Ponens argument form with a compound antecedent (see Warren, p. 83). After refuting the false charge of intoxication, using proof from Joel 2 (vss. 15-21), Peter advanced four lines of argumentation, meticulously supported by evidence:

- I. Jesus was:
 - A. Approved/validated by God (vs. 22)—Supporting evidence:
 1. Jesus performed miracles
 2. The audience **knew** it
 - B. Crucified by men (vs. 23)—the very ones present were responsible
 - C. Resurrected by God (vs. 24)—Supporting evidence:
 1. Psalm 16 (vss. 25-28)
 - (1) Not referring to David, since David's tomb still in existence (vs. 29)

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(2) David was a prophet to whom God revealed the coming Christ (vss. 30-31)

2. The apostles (and others) witnessed the resurrection (vs. 32)—which was checkable

D. Ascended to heaven (vss. 33-34)—Supporting evidence:

1. The undeniable tongue speaking manifested by the apostles came from Christ (vs. 33)

2. Psalm 110—The ascension described did not refer to David (cf. vs. 29), but to Christ

II. **Therefore:** Jesus (of Nazareth—vs. 22) is the Lord and Christ (vs. 36)

Having pressed four arguments, carefully supported by scriptural and verifiable evidence, like any good logician, Peter proceeded to deduce the only reasonable conclusion that could be drawn from the evidence: “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

In harmony with his logical defense of the Faith on the day of Pentecost, Peter enjoined the same behavior on all Christians when he told them to “always be ready to **give a defense** to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15, emp. added). The phrase translated “give a defense” (NKJV; “give an answer,” KJV/NIV) is from the very Greek word from which the transliterated term “apologetics” is derived. A technical, legal term that was used in the Greek law courts (Wuest, 1942, 2:89), it connotes rational activity—mustering arguments that prove the case. Wuest explains that the term entails “presenting a verbal defense for it, refuting the statements of the destructive critic” (2:89). By inspiration, Peter insisted that every Christian is to develop skill in apologetics—the ability to defend the Christian Faith. As Greek scholar A.T. Robertson explained: “Ready with a spoken defence [sic] of the inward hope. This attitude calls for an intelligent grasp of the hope and skill in presenting it” (1933, 6:114). Notice in the same verse Peter’s use of the word “reason” (*logon*—answer, explanation, accounting [Thayer, 1901, p. 381; Arndt and Gingrich, 1957, p. 479]). The term indicates that Christians have a reason-

able faith, one that can be defended and established as true. Peter, too, was a divinely guided, first-rate logician.

Others Also Committed to Being Rational

Luke engaged in the same sort of rational enterprise in the writing of his inspired contributions to the Christian Scriptures. He wrote his gospel account so that Theophilus and subsequent readers might “know the certainty” (Luke 1:4) of the Christian message. In writing Acts, he noted how Jesus’ resurrection was verified by “many convincing proofs” (Acts 1:3, NASB). These declarations connote rational activity. Apollos, likewise, employed logic and reasonable discourse. Observe the terms that are used to describe his verbal proclivities: “for he **vigorously** [*eutonos*—powerfully, strenuously, intensely] **refuted** [*diakatelegcheto*—argue down to a finish, confute with rivalry, refute completely] the Jews publicly, **showing** [*epideiknuso*—proving, demonstrating, setting forth so that all see] from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 18:28, emp. added).

Stephen was hauled into court before the Sanhedrin to give account of his alleged criticism of Judaism (Acts 6:11-15). He was literally on trial for his life. Yet his “defense” was hardly calculated to achieve his release. As F.F. Bruce noted: “Anything less likely to win a verdict of ‘not guilty’ from the judges can scarcely be imagined. It is rather **an apology in the sense that it is a reasoned defence [sic] of the position which he had maintained**” (1959, p. 24, emp. added). Indeed, Stephen used skillful reasoning and logic to place his accusers on trial before the judgment bar of God. His conclusion consisted of an indictment of the Jews for their murderous resistance of the Holy Spirit, evidenced by their history (Acts 7:2-50), culminating in their execution of the Christ (vss. 51-53). His logic was so powerfully penetrating that his enraged hearers stoned him to death.

The apostle John demonstrated the same attribute. With so many false representations of religion then (and now), he warned his readers: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits**, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1, emp. added).

Observe carefully that the “spirits” to which John referred were “false prophets,” i.e., mere human beings who went about attempting to deceive other people with their false religious ideas. Times have not changed one iota. The 21st century world of humanity—just like the 1st century—is literally inundated with false religion. Billions of people are deceived thereby. Yet, such is no proof that atheism is true. Nor is this state of affairs justification for failure to so consider the available evidence that one comes to the warranted conclusion that the God of the Bible exists. John insisted that every individual is under obligation to “test” (*dokimadzete*—put to the test, prove, scrutinize) by examining any doctrine, belief, or practice with which he or she is confronted in order to ascertain whether it is the truth. That means that every accountable person on Earth is under divine obligation to recognize that the extant evidence clearly demonstrates that the God of the Bible exists, the Bible is His inspired instructions to mankind, Christianity is the one true religion, and to be saved a person must love and obey the teachings of Jesus Christ as found in the New Testament.

Jude, the fleshly brother of Jesus, wrote a very short treatise for the New Testament canon. It, too, follows the same protocol regarding the need for rationality. In warning Christians about those who would subvert the Christian message, Jude declared: “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to **contend earnestly** for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (vs. 3, emp. added). The two words “contend earnestly” are a translation of the single Greek word *epagonidzomai* which means “to fight, contend” (Arndt and Gingrich, p. 281), referring to the strenuous, even agonizing, verbal defense in behalf of the truth of the Christian Faith. Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest notes that inherent in the term is the “vigorous, intense, determined struggle to defeat the opposition...presenting evidences of the divine source of Christianity and the falsity of the modernistic position” (2:235).

Even the angels—those celestial, spiritual beings who submit their wills to

their Creator—naturally manifest the same propensity for rational analysis and promotion of Bible religion. The only angel in the Bible designated an “archangel” (*archaggelos*—“chief angel”; see Blass, et al., 1961, p. 64; Thayer, p. 76; Wuest, 2:246; cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16), Michael, likewise projected logical propensities: “Yet Michael the archangel, in **contending** with the devil, when he **disputed** about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’” (Jude 9, emp. added). Like Jesus, Michael engaged in a verbal disputation with Satan. The word translated “contending” (*diakrinomōnos*) means to dispute. Michael engaged in an intellectual attempt to convict Satan with the correct view on the matter. The word translated “disputed” (*dielegeto*), already discussed with regard to Paul’s activity, means to argue and reason with a person. Michael obviously gave the devil specific reasons, propositions, and arguments that were designed to refute Satan’s erroneous viewpoint, while affirming the correct one.

THE BIBLE CONSISTENTLY CALLS FOR RATIONALITY

All of these individuals were simply emulating the nature of God—who is spirit (John 4:24). Since one of His eminent attributes is correct thinking, He created humans to function the same way (though they can refuse to do so because of impure, ulterior motives). Passage after passage in the Bible demonstrates this premiere, conscientious concern for rational thinking. Solomon warned: “The naïve believes everything, but the **sensible** man considers his steps” (Proverbs 14:15, NASU, emp. added). Quoting God, the magnanimous prophet Isaiah pleaded with his contemporaries: “Come now, and let us **reason** together” (1:18, emp. added). Luke commended the Bereans, labeling them “more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica” because “they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11, NASB). The Bereans listened to the oral claims, and then compared that information with scriptural evidence, before drawing any conclusions.

CONCLUSION

Jesus, the apostles, the prophets, and all the inspired writers of the Bible were meticulous in their observance of the Law of Rationality. In their religious pronouncements, they methodically set forth evidence, explained that evidence, and then proved the conclusion of their arguments. Jesus unquestionably taught that all human beings should recognize and honor the Law of Rationality. No one is exempt from this premiere necessity. Only by knowing truth, loving truth, handling truth correctly, and obeying the truth can a person be acceptable to God (John 8:32; 2 Thessalonians 2:10; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 1:22).

Those who wish to be pleasing to God and live eternally with Him in heaven must not succumb to the humanistic hurricane that is assaulting society. With the decline of American civilization, and its concomitant deterioration and dissolution of the Christian values on which it was constructed (see Miller, 2008; Miller, 2009), fewer citizens see the need for a rational approach to life and religion. With this destructive storm have come the hurricane force winds and waves of existentialism and Pentecostalism. These violent and damaging forces have seeped into the church of our Lord. Meanwhile, the atheist, skeptic, and agnostic ridicule the corruptions of Christianity that dominate the spiritual landscape, all the while making the false and unwarranted assumption that true, New Testament Christianity is to be judged based on these corruptions. They, too, are conducting themselves as irrationally as those they demean. We must awaken out of our slumber and do all we can to salvage and save all who will manifest receptivity to the **reasonable** truths of our God. Now, more than ever before in recent history, we must remain unwavering in our proclamation of “words of truth and reason” (Acts 26:25). We must understand that living the Christian life means living a **rational** life.

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NOTE FROM *The Editor*



R&R Subscriptions/A.P. Summer Camp

Last month, we provided our readers with an offer that is designed to increase the number of subscribers to *R&R*. Keep in mind that we are not doing so to make money. In fact, the cost of printing and mailing *R&R* each month is virtually equal to the amount of money collected from subscriptions. No, we're not trying to make a profit. Rather, our purpose of expanding our readership is single-minded: **we want more people to have access to the invaluable material this journal contains.** We go to great lengths to provide scholarly, well-written, informative, cutting edge articles that defend the Christian Faith by engaging the top sources of unbelief, skepticism, and atheism in the world today. In addition to numerous Bible-oriented articles that we publish each year, we provide readers with insightful articles written by men who hold terminal degrees in science. These men are scientists who hold degrees from prestigious universities around the country. Their scientific expertise equals (if not surpasses) that of the evolutionists whom they challenge. It is nothing short of thrilling to read articles written by qualified scientists who defend the Bible account of Creation and the origin of man. We think you will agree that such material deserves a wide circulation. Many individuals—whom you know personally—deserve to be exposed to these timely articles. What greater gift could you give to friends, co-workers,

neighbors, and relatives than to bolster their faith and deepen their spirituality? For every subscription to *R&R* you purchase, you get one free. (See the center spread for more details). Why not call our offices right now and do a friend a favor? Please hurry, because the sale ends July 31.

On another note, Apologetics Press just finished conducting its first ever "Apologetics Press Christian Evidences Camp." To say the least, we are elated with the results. Over 200 campers and staff workers participated. In addition to the usual fun and games that go with summer camp (i.e., canoeing, swimming, crafts, sports, etc.), and the devos and Bible studies that nurture the spiritual dimension of young people, campers were treated to some rather unique experiences. The overall theme for the camp pertained to proving the existence of God. Perhaps the highlight of the camp was the appearance of several A.P. scientists who taught classes and delivered nightly lectures—including a biochemist, a cell biologist, a mechanical engineer, and an astrophysicist. More details will be forthcoming, including an announcement that will set the dates for next year's camp.

Dave Miller

See the Center Spread
for More Details